Healthy Body Sick Mind

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Healthy Body Sick Mind

by Azure_K_Mello

Summary

When Will becomes too ill to stand Hannibal takes him to another neurologist. Then the good doctor takes care of him and learns a little more about Will in the process.

Notes

This story makes illusions to the episode Ceuf but if you haven't seen that all you need to know is that Will was raised by a single father, they had no money, says he feels family is like an ill fitting suit and avoided questions about whether or not he has siblings. Oh, and Hannibal is a creepy guy who looked through his stuff while feeding his dogs.

This is pre-slash. They're going to end up together later in the series. They're MFEO.

See the end of the work for more notes

It wasn't until Will collapsed at a crime scene that Hannibal had taken him seriously. He'd driven Will home and made Will scrambled eggs. Will had eaten though he felt woozy. The dogs had looked up at him lovingly as he ate. Hannibal had fed them their kibble, asked him to draw yet another clock and said, "You need to see another neurologist."

Will fidgeted and said, "We saw Dr. Sutcliffe. He said it's mental. But I know what kind of crazy I am. I'm not this kind of crazy."

"The first morning we met I didn't apologize to you for a slight saying that I reserve apologies for important things. I'm so sorry, Will, I believed this to be mental. I was wrong and you were right. This is something physical. I am sorry that I did not listen. You need a second opinion."

Will felt shocked as he said, "So you believe me? You're not going to say I fainted from exhaustion?"

Shaking his head Hannibal said, "You are physically ill. Even the best doctors can be wrong. Another neurologist may see something he missed. I have an awful lot of neurologists in my rolodex."

Relief washed over Will and he thanked Hannibal. The next day Hannibal took him to another neurologist. She was a lady who smiled at him warmly. She asked what was wrong and Will told her about the hallucinations, the nightmares, the insomnia, the stag, the sleepwalking and collapse. He finished by saying, "I'm not this kind of crazy."

When he was done Hannibal spoke, "The collapse was caused by a seizure, a mild one but a seizure nonetheless. I have been asking Will to draw clocks to physically orient himself in place and time. Yesterday Will drew this." He held out the notebook.

Will saw it and said, "So what?"

"I don't want to alarm you, Will, but that is not a clock. Your drawings have been shaky recently but I thought it was stress."

Will looked at it and said, "It looks like a clock."

The neurologist looked at it and said, "No, it doesn't but that's okay. We're going to give you an MRI and see what's going on. Dr. Lecter was right to call."

"Will is not a patient; he is a colleague and a friend," Hannibal said.

She nodded and said, "That makes sense. I was wondering why you were calling in favors and getting me in my office at seven AM on a Saturday." She brought him to the MRI machine and she said, "Will, do you want ear plugs or headphones for a feed?"

"A feed?"

“Into the imaging booth where Hannibal and I will be. You can hear us we can hear you. You can tell me to stop or you can ask questions.”

“I want the feed. Dr. Sutcliffe didn’t offer me that.”

“Okay,” she set him up in the machine and said, “Tell me if you want to stop. If you would please count out loud for me? I want to know if you begin having a seizure and counting will be an indicator. You can stop counting if you have a question. Okay?”

He nodded and she pushed the button that moved him into the machine. After only a few moments he heard her say, “How are you doing, Will? Hannibal and I are right here.”

“I’m okay.”

“Good. Count for me?” Will began counting. He only got to ninety-two when she said, “Will, do you want the good news or bad first?”

“Bad.”

“You’re going to be on a lot of drugs and this might get worse before it gets better. The good news is that you’re not crazy.”

“What is it?”

“Encephalitis, it’s advanced and nasty. We’re going to fill you up with antivirals and antibiotics.”

“Oh God,” Will breathed out slowly, “you have no idea how good it is to know I’m not going crazy.”

“It’s not crazy, Will. It’s physical. You should be hospitalized for treatment. The drugs are going to knock the hell out of you. And, at the doses you need, you’re not going to be able to take care of yourself.”

“I have dogs.”

“I’m sure a friend can take care of them.”

“There are seven of them,” Will said. He didn’t say that he didn’t have many friends. Sure, Alana might take a couple of them but seven was very different that two. There was no one else to ask.

Will heard Hannibal clear his throat then the man said, “I’ll stay with you, Will, you and the dogs.”

“Hannibal-”

“Will, I must make amends for my mistake. I did not believe you and perhaps this could have been caught sooner. I insist: I’ll stay with you and the dogs.”

“Thank you,” said Will softly.

During a break the doctor gave him pills to swallow. During another break she had a nurse take blood for testing. The whole process took two hours and Will couldn’t stop smiling. “Most people don’t smile at encephalitis.”

“I thought I was really losing it. I don’t care if the treatment is long and hard. I don’t even care if it kills me. I’m so relieved to know I’m not losing my mind that I don’t care about anything else.”

She smiled at him and then he was excused to get redressed. When he came back she gave him large prescription bottles and instructions. He was going to be taking a lot of pills. She promised to call him when she got his blood work back. She needed to look at the pictures to see if the damage would be permanent. Right now, she said, the most important thing was to lower his fever and lessen the swelling.

She let them go and as they left Hannibal said, “May I drive? I’m slightly worried about you driving now that I know your brain is pushing against your skull.” Will laughed and tossed him the keys. He aimed for Hannibal’s hand that was held for them. They hit Hannibal in the face and Will wondered if it was bad aim or if his spatial reasoning was really that damaged. Hannibal laughed and said, “If you blind me, Dr. Bloom will have to come and nurse both of us.” That made Will laugh. At home Hannibal asked, “Is your bedroom upstairs?”

“Hannibal, you fed my dogs. You’re a great man but let’s not pretend you’re a saint and didn’t snoop. You finished my fly.”

Hannibal nodded. “I couldn’t leave it alone.” He guided Will to his bedroom on the ground floor but as Will sat down on the bed he almost instantly stood up again.

“I should get you towels. The guest room is upstairs. The sheets are clean but you need towels.”

Hannibal pushed him back down with ease. “I can find the linen closet. Are you hot?” Will nodded. “I’ll find you a fan.” He gave Will the sleep aid the neurologist had given him.

“I don’t think I have a fan; I just open the window to the breeze.” Hannibal nodded and opened the window but the air coming in wasn’t very cool.

“Try to sleep, I’ll feed the dog and let them out. Later I’ll go to my house but I’ll be back before you wake up.”

Will nodded, pulled off his pants and allowed himself to pass out. When he woke up he was blissfully cool. He was not sweaty and the room was dark with night. He wondered what the pills were that allowed him to sleep without dreams. He heard a whirring noise and saw a free standing air conditioner. He pulled on thin robe, not because he was cold but because he knew Hannibal was outside. He groped for his glasses. They were folded on his bedside table and he knew that he hadn’t done it. In the living room he saw another air conditioner. Everything was cool and quiet. Charlie was asleep on the couch but the other dogs were

nowhere to be seen. The smell coming from the kitchen was intoxicating and Will wondered when he last ate.

Hannibal was at it stove. The equipment was not anything Will owned. The frying pan Hannibal was using was shiny. Hannibal turned with a smile. The room was warmer than the others and Will saw the door was open and the dogs were playing outside.

“You’re frying something that smells simple,” he observed.

“I appreciate perfect haute cuisine. But when I am ill I want cold borscht and a hot boiled potato. It doesn’t have to be well plated or aesthetically pleasing. I don’t know what your father made you when you were ill. But I know hamburgers are a staple of American food.”

Will stumbled to his table and said, “Thank you. You didn’t have to do any of this.”

“No, I didn’t. I wanted to. You are my friend and, even if I hadn’t contributed to your current state, I would want to help you.” Hannibal put a glass of orange juice in front of him.

Hannibal was wearing a sweater and Will asked, “Is it cold in here?”

“Are you cold?”

“No, it feels perfect.”

“Then it is perfect.” Hannibal brought two plates to the table. Burgers on toasted rolls with cut tomatoes and baked potatoes. Will saw bottles of ketchup and mayo were already on the table. “Good?” he asked.

Will nodded as he added mayo to the bun and a little ketchup on top of the patty, “Perfect. We ate burgers, a lot of fish, grilled cheese, tomato soup and a lot of southern food. Cheap and filling. Burgers are perfect.” And it was delicious. It was perfectly cooked. Will groaned as he ate. “Amazing.”

“Good,” said Hannibal. “All the meals I cook you meals with expertly butchered meat and you prefer the burger made with beef from Giant-Landover.”

“Sorry,” Will said without much feeling. “I was drug up. I know you cook amazing things but it’s harder to judge those meals because I don’t have anything to compare them too. This,” he said, gesturing to the burger he was holding one handed, “is an amazing burger. I’ve eaten a lot of burgers so I can judge it. Besides, I like this meat more.” He realized after he said it that it probably sounded bad. Even though he was socially awkward and had a fever he knew that sounded better in his head.

Hannibal smiled and took a bite of his own burger. “I usually have venison, duck or rabbit. Perhaps it’s just that you’re more used to the flavor of this.”

“Maybe,” agreed Will.

“My butcher’s meat is locally sourced. I hunt a lot of it but… it’s not inspected by the USDA. I worried about exposing you to anything that might be in that meat while you are so ill.”

“I’m sorry to upset your patterns.”

“I cook for people to share my passion with them. I think from now on I’ll cook for you with more traditional meat.”

“You honestly don’t have-”

Hannibal interrupted him, “Will, stop telling me what I do and do not have to do.” After they ate Hannibal handed him five pills. “Take those and go back to bed.” He called the dogs in and busied himself with their bowls.

“I should at least do the dishes.”

“No, go to bed.” Will swallowed the pills and didn’t argue, he left his bedroom door open for the dogs and stripped his robe off before slumping face down on the bed. He felt rather than saw his dogs join him. It wasn’t much later when Hannibal came in and said, “Put this under your arm.” Will did so without questioning. It was an icepack and uncomfortable but the drugs made him sleep.

The next couple days confused him. His fever stayed in place, Hannibal observed that it must have been viral because the antibiotics would have stopped it. He kept giving Will ice packs for under his arms saying that while it wouldn’t break the fever it would lower his core temperature. Will asked, “Don’t you have patients?”

“All canceled or referred. Don’t worry.”

The afternoon of the second day the neurologist called and said it was La Crosse virus and prescribed him an intravenous drug to stop viral RNA replication. Will was worried that meant he would have to go to the hospital but instead Hannibal got the IV bags and a poll from the hospital and put it next to Will’s bed. He didn’t have to take the antibiotics anymore but he was still on the antivirals, the sleep aid and something to try and lower the fever.

It was the third day when the phone rang. Will was dosing when the phone rang. It wasn’t his cell phone and there was only one person who ever called his house phone. He struggled to get up, reaching for the IV poll for balance. But he heard Hannibal’s accented, cultured voice say, “Hello, Will Graham’s phone.” Will knew who it was and was nervous as hell about the conversation. “Ah, Mr. Graham, what a pleasure to speak to you… Will’s actually quite ill. He’s on bed rest. I’ll bring the phone through.” He came in with a slightly amused smile. “Will, it’s your father.”

Will very rarely made eye contact but now he avoided looking above Hannibal’s mouth. “Thanks,” said Will. He took the phone and let himself collapse back onto the bed. “Hi, Daddy.” He closed his eyes. He knew the twang came back to his voice when he spoke to his dad. He’d fought so hard to lose the accent when he went to college but he couldn’t say “daddy” without it slipping back to his tongue.

“So that’s Hannibal,” said his dad with a laugh obvious in his voice.

“Yep.” He heard the man shutting the door behind him.

“He sounds clever.”

“You say that about everyone with an accent.”

“Well, I can barely speak English, let alone another one. He said you were ill?”

“I’ve been feeling really rough for a few months. Thought I was going mad.” He knew that his vowels had gone softer and his consonants less sharp. He hoped Hannibal wasn’t listening. “I saw a neurologist who said it was mental. Then I collapsed at a crime scene and saw another neurologist. She says I have an infection that making my brain swell and giving me hallucinations, fever and insomnia. So I’m on a load of drugs and Hannibal keeps feeding me. He’s very good at taking care of people. He even brought air conditioners and I don’t feel hot for the first time in months.”

“Hannibal didn’t notice he was in bed with a furnace?” asked his dad and that was why Will hadn’t wanted him talking to Hannibal.

“I always run hot. It wasn’t that noticeable. But for the last few days I’ve been tucked up in bed with the dogs.”

“Why didn’t you tell me you were so sick, Will? I would have come up.”

“I didn’t want to scare you when I thought I was going crazy.”

They talked for a few minutes but Will kept getting confused and, even though their conversation was shorter than it usually was his dad said, “Will, honey, get some sleep y’hear?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

“Love you, boy.”

“Love you too.” After their goodbyes Will hung up and dropped the phone of his bed.

He was alone for a little while drifting in and out of sleep. Then Hannibal brought him a cup of tea and a glass of ice water. Will sat up to accept them and Hannibal said, “Your father believes us to be lovers.”

“Yeah, sorry about that.”

“Why does he think we’re lovers?”

“I was telling him about something you’d said, something funny and light. I don’t talk to him about work. I didn’t say that you were a psychiatrist employed to make sure I don’t lose it at a crime scene. I just called you a friend. He thought I meant a boyfriend and he was so happy because it’s been a while. So I didn’t correct him. You won’t meet and after a little while I’ll tell him we ended it on good terms,” Will shrugged. “He worries about me. Because, well, you’ve met me. He’s happy so I didn’t correct him. Sorry.”

“It’s fine, Will, I can understand.” But then Hannibal said, “Why does he believe your lover would be a man?”

“From experience. I introduced him to boyfriends in the past.”

Hannibal looked surprised for the first time since they’d met. “I thought perhaps there was something between you and Dr. Bloom.”

“Alana is an anomaly. I do like her and I liked when she kissed me. But she said I need to be more stable to be in a relationship with her I was relieved. It wouldn’t end well, not just because she’s a woman.” He didn’t know how to explain the many ways romance would destroy that relationship. With his imagination he could see every possible ending and not a single one of them was happy.

Hannibal broke Will’s thinking when he said, “Perhaps you were confused because she drinks beer.” That made Will smile. “You told me you never connected to the concept of family. Yet, you’re obviously fond of your father.”

“I love my father. It’s my three brothers I never understood. I don’t understand why you’re supposed to feel an alliance with and love for people just because you share their blood.” Then he added, “I think my fever’s going down.”

Hannibal reached out and touched his forehead. “Yes, I believe you are correct. I’ll find the thermometer.”

Time blurred again and Will was ill on and off for three weeks. Hannibal brought him to and from the doctor and fed him. He made comfort food and fancy feasts in Will’s unfussy kitchen but all the meat was recognizable for once. Usually, Will hated having people in his space. It was stressful to have people in his safe, private sphere. But somehow watching Hannibal stretch out on his couch, stand at his sink, look at Will’s knickknacks and paintings, felt right. He stroked the dogs and talked to them with a soft voice. He didn’t touch the broken boat motor but admired his flies. He admonished Will to wear more bug spray and long sleeves while fishing.

When Will finally got a clean bill of health and was capable of taking care of himself he said, “Hannibal, thank you. For everything. If there is anything you ever need you can count on me.”

Hannibal smiled and said, “I’ve always known you I count on you. In the future you should never hesitate to lean on me.”

End Notes

The title of this story came from an Operation Ivy song that contains the line, "Your schedule's hectic and you've got no time to kill.

Works inspired by this one

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